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X-FACTOR
YARDIN
DIRECT EDITION
Saints&Angels
RATED T+
$2.99 US
WWW.MARVEL.COM

In a society where mutants and former mutants alike feel threatened by the world around them, they turn to their first, best line of defense whenever trouble arises: X-Factor, the private detective agency founded by Madrox, the Multiple Man.

X-FACTOR

What happened last issue: Eighty years from now, Madrox is assigned by an aged Scott Summers to figure out why key members of the Summers rebellion are disappearing and reappearing. Sensing a time paradox, Madrox resolves to go to the one living person who might be able to supply answers. Nothing else that happened last issue is relevant. However, the issue before, Guido and Rictor tracked down the Reverend John Maddox–a dupe of Madrox's now living as a priest–hoping to find answers about their missing friend. Instead they were attacked by Shatterstar.

NEXT ISSUE:
A letters page. Check out the announcement at the end of this issue.

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X-FACTOR (ISSN #1932-5266) No. 45, August, 2009. Published Monthly except semi-monthly in August by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.

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$2.99 per copy in the U.S. (GST #R127032852) in the direct market and $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $3.99 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand; Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** Subscription rate (U.S. dollars) for 12 issues: U.S. $27.00; Canada $37.00; Foreign $39.00. POSTMASTER: SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO X-FACTOR, C/O MARVEL SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 110 NEWBURGH, NY 12550. TELEPHONE # (800) 217-9158. FAX # (845) 457-5029. subscriptions@marvelsubs.com. ALAN FINE, EVP - Office Of The Chief Executive Marvel Entertainment, Inc. & CMO Marvel Characters B.V.; DAN BUCKLEY, President of Publishing - Print & Digital Media; JIM SOKOLOWSKI, Chief Operating Officer; DAVID GABRIEL, SVP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; DAVID BOGART, SVP of Business Affairs & Talent Management; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP Merchandising & Communications; JIM O'KEEFE, VP of Operations & Logistics; DAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN F. GABRIE, Director of Publishing & Editorial Operations; SUSAN CRESPI, Editorial Operations Manager; ALEX MORALES, Publishing Operations Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Mitch Dane, Advertising Director, at mdane@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

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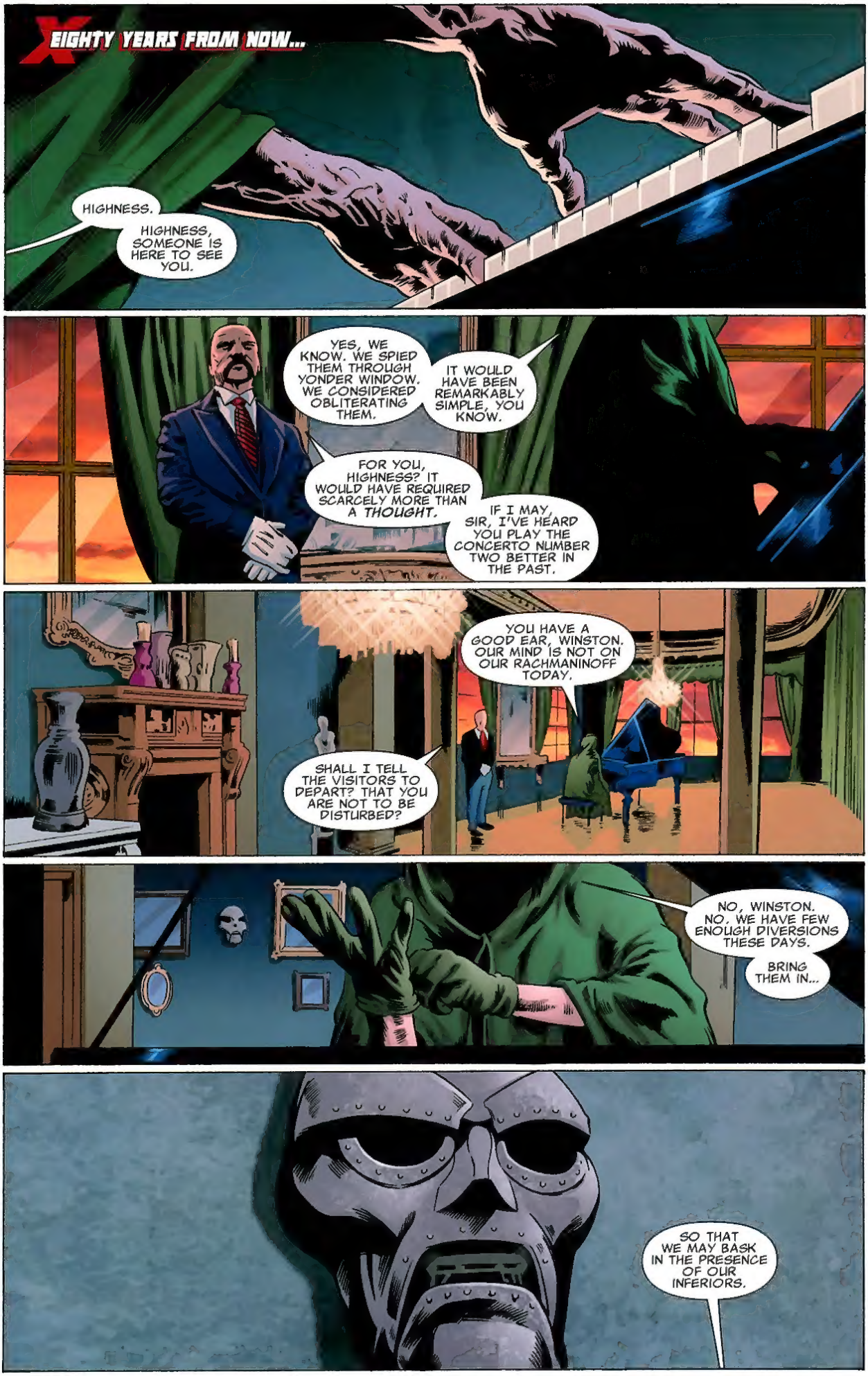

EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
HIGHNESS.
HIGHNESS, SOMEONE IS HERE TO SEE YOU.
YES, WE KNOW. WE SPIED THEM THROUGH YONDER WINDOW. WE CONSIDERED OBLITERATING THEM.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY SIMPLE, YOU KNOW.
FOR YOU, HIGHNESS? IT WOULD HAVE REQUIRED SCARCELY MORE THAN A THOUGHT.
IF I MAY, SIR, I'VE HEARD YOU PLAY THE CONCERTO NUMBER TWO BETTER IN THE PAST.
YOU HAVE A GOOD EAR, WINSTON. OUR MIND IS NOT ON OUR RACHMANINOFF TODAY.
SHALL I TELL THE VISITORS TO DEPART? THAT YOU ARE NOT TO BE DISTURBED?
NO, WINSTON. NO, WE HAVE FEW ENOUGH DIVERSIONS THESE DAYS.
BRING THEM IN...
SO THAT WE MAY BASK IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR INFERIORS.

I'M TELLING YOU, THIS IS A BAD IDEA.
YES, MADROX, I AM.
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME, RUBY?
NICE TO KNOW YOU'RE TELLING ME SOMETHING.
MEANING...?
MEANING YOU AND SCOTT HAVE BEEN GIVING ME INFORMATION IN DRIBS AND DRABS.
PASSING COMMENTS, HINTS, TEASES.
I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT FROM LAYLA...
IT'S TRUE. I'M A TERRIBLE TEASE.
THE POINT IS, IF I'M GOING TO BE OF REAL HELP TO YOU, I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST.
OUR PAST IS YOUR FUTURE, MADROX. A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE IS A DANGEROUS THING, AND TOO MUCH CAN BE FATAL.
MY FATHER AND I DIDN'T ASK FOR YOU TO BE HERE. NEVER WANTED YOU HERE.
SINCE YOU ARE...
...YOU PLAY THINGS OUR WAY IF YOU WANT TO MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL.
OTHERWISE YOU CAN WANDER AROUND ON YOUR OWN UNTIL SOME SENTINEL DECIDES TO TURN YOU INTO MULTIPLE MUSH.
REALLY. AND HOW ABOUT IF INSTEAD I--
GUYS...?

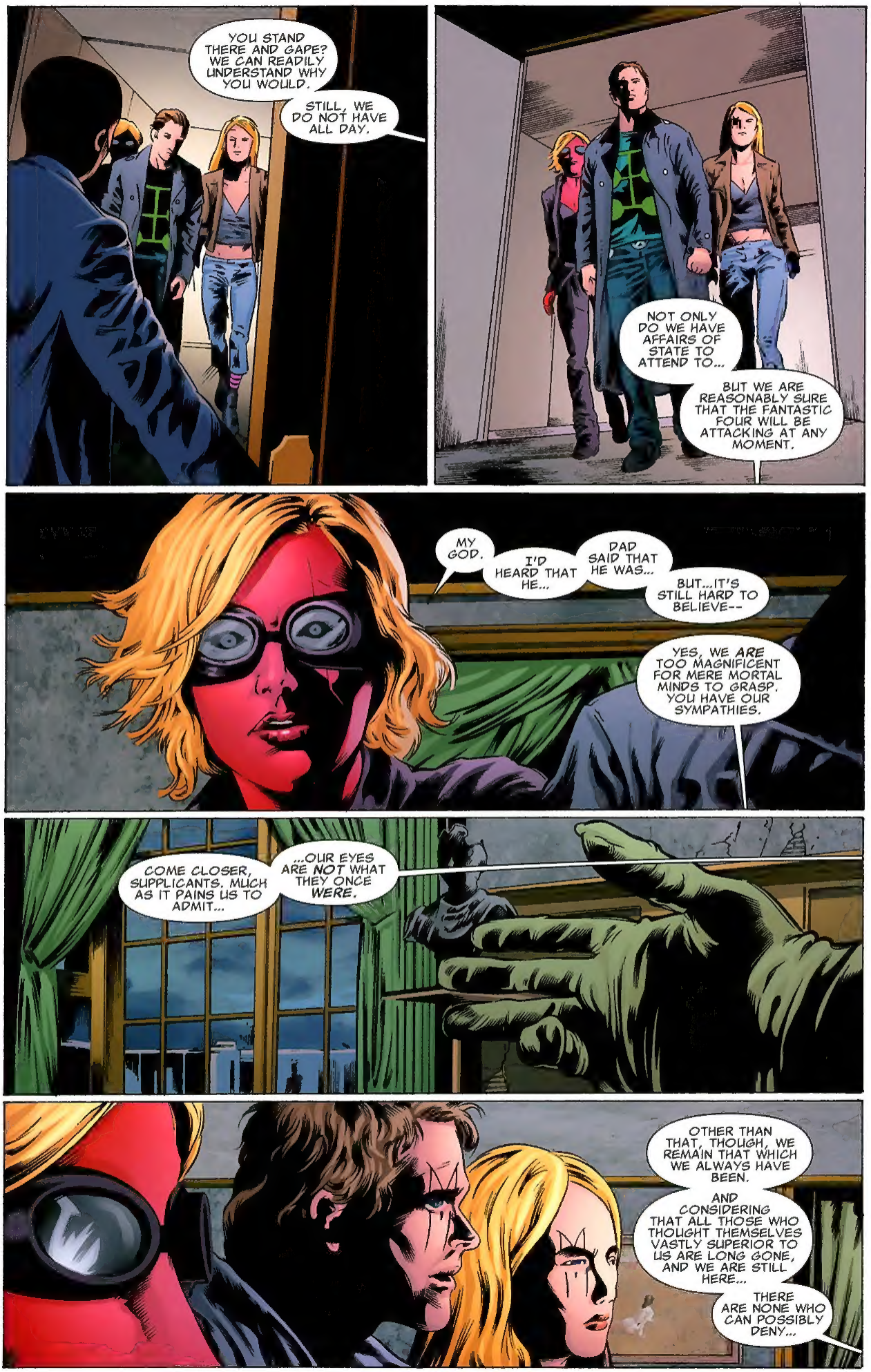
AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO SEE WHICH OF YOU PROVES TO HAVE MORE TESTOSTERONE...
WE'RE HERE.
I STILL SAY THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME.
CONSIDERING NOBODY ASKED YOU TO COME, THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?
BECAUSE... WELL... ACTUALLY...
WAIT. YOU'VE NEVER *MET* HIM, HAVE YOU.
WELL... NO.
AND YOU WANTED TO.
FINE. I'M CURIOUS. IF YOU DON'T LIKE THAT, THEN SHOCK YOU.
"SHOCK YOU?" WHAT THE HELL KIND OF CURSE IS THAT?
IF WE HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY IN, STAY BEHIND ME. I'LL TAKE POINT...
KNOK KNOK

HIGHNESS, ARE YOU QUITE CERTAIN THAT--?
STOP DALLYING, WINSTON, AND ADMIT THEM TO THE PRESENCE.
GREETINGS, VISITORS.
WHAT BOON DO YOU SEEK...
...FROM VICTOR VON DOOM?

NOW...
ARRRHHH!!!

SHATTERSTAR! WHAT THE HELL--?!
BLAM
I'M WARNING YOU! SHOOTING PEOPLE WAS NEVER PART OF ANY SKILL SET I WANTED...
...BUT I'M STARTING TO GET RATHER PRACTICED AT IT!
SO DON'T MAKE ANY SUDDEN MOVES OR I'LL HAVE TO--
UNFFFFF!

INTERESTING.
THE MADROX REPLICATE DID NOT ITSELF REPLICATE WHEN STRUCK.
I WONDER WHY.
PERHAPS REPLICATION IS LIKE A MUSCLE; IF IT REMAINS UNUSED, IT ATROPHIES.
A MADROX REPLICATE, IF IT GOES FOR A LONG ENOUGH PERIOD OF TIME, LOSES THE ABILITY TO DUPLICATE ITSELF.
NOT THAT THE FATE OF THE DUPLICATE IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. BUT IT'S AN INTERESTING FACT TO FILE AWAY.
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO BE IMPORTANT IN THE FUTURE.


YOU STAND THERE AND GAPE? WE CAN READILY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD.
STILL, WE DO NOT HAVE ALL DAY.
NOT ONLY DO WE HAVE AFFAIRS OF STATE TO ATTEND TO...
BUT WE ARE REASONABLY SURE THAT THE FANTASTIC FOUR WILL BE ATTACKING AT any MOMENT.
MY GOD.
I'D HEARD THAT HE...
DAD SAID THAT HE WAS...
BUT...IT'S STILL HARD TO BELIEVE--
YES, WE ARE TOO MAGNIFICENT FOR MERE MORTAL MINDS TO GRASP. YOU HAVE OUR SYMPATHIES.
COME CLOSER, SUPPLICANTS. MUCH AS IT PAINS US TO ADMIT...
...OUR EYES ARE NOT WHAT THEY ONCE WERE.
OTHER THAN THAT, THOUGH, WE REMAIN THAT WHICH WE ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.
AND CONSIDERING THAT ALL THOSE WHO THOUGHT THEMSELVES VASTLY SUPERIOR TO US ARE LONG GONE, AND WE ARE STILL HERE...
THERE ARE NONE WHO CAN POSSIBLY DENY...

...THAT THE FINAL TRIUMPH BELONGS TO VON DOOM.

SHATTERSTAR, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WHATEVER'S GOING ON--
--SNAP THE HELL OUT OF IT...
...OR I SWEAR TO GOD, I'LL SHOOT!
DO IT, THEN.
YOU HEARD ME.
DO IT!

BAM

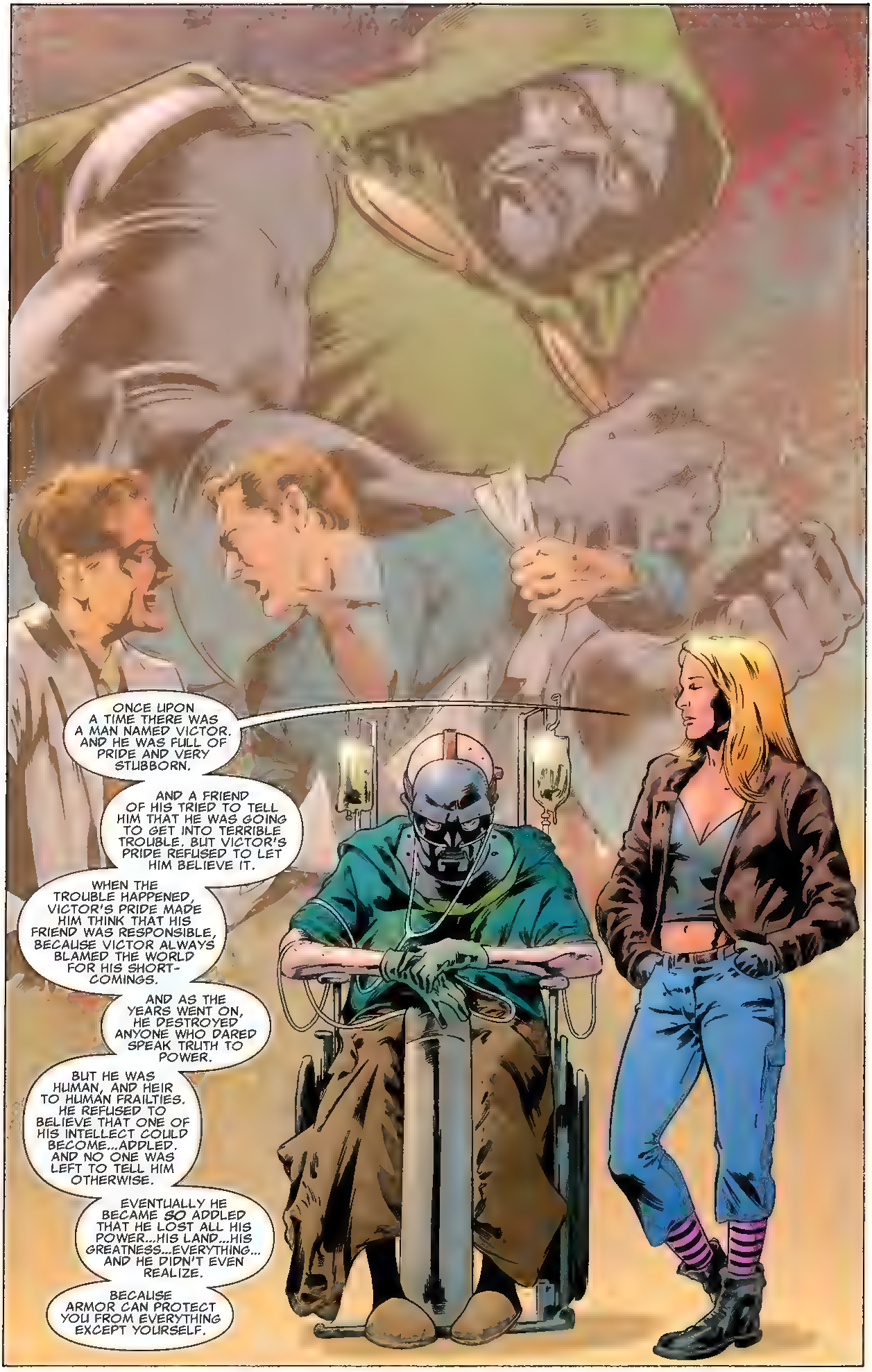
WHOA.
DUDE
NICE MOVE.
THANKS.
KLIK
KLIK KLIK KLIK
NICE MOVE.

THANKS.
AIN'T NOTHING
OH, NO YA DON'T! YA DON'T CATCH ME FLAT-FOOTED TWICE.
GUIDO, SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH HIM! DON'T HURT HIM!
UNNNNHHH...
ME...HURT HIM...?

FINE! PUNCH ME SOME MORE! YOU'LL JUST MAKE ME STRONGER, SO BE MY GUE--
SHAK
AW CRAP.
BA-CHA-BOOM
Y'KNOW, IT AIN'T LIKE I DON'T GOT MUSCLE TO SPARE, BUT THAT GUY WEIGHED ALMOST NOTHIN'!
HIS BONES ARE HOLLOW.

HOLLOW?! HE CHUCKED ME THROUGH A WALL! HOW IS HE HOLLOW?
IT'S... COMPLICATED. HE'S FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION. THE SAME ONE LONGSHOT'S FROM.
THAT'S SOME WHACK-JOB DIMENSION, LEMME TELL YA.
"GUIDO, HE'S GOT NO REASON TO BE LIKE THIS. SHATTERSTAR'S ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS. WE'VE WORKED TOGETHER. WE'VE...
"THIS JUST ISN'T HIM.
"WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM. FIND OUT WHY HE'S DOING THIS."
BUDDY. YO, BUDDY.
WE HAVE VAGRANCY LAWS AROUND HERE.

YOU GOT SOMEWHERE TO GO?
BECAUSE YOU CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND HERE ALL D--
WHA--?
PLEASE BE QUIET I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF THINK.
SMASH
THAT'S BETTER.


ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A MAN NAMED VICTOR. AND HE WAS FULL OF PRIDE AND VERY STUBBORN.
AND A FRIEND OF HIS TRIED TO TELL HIM THAT HE WAS GOING TO GET INTO TERRIBLE TROUBLE. BUT VICTOR'S PRIDE REFUSED TO LET HIM BELIEVE IT.
WHEN THE TROUBLE HAPPENED, VICTOR'S PRIDE MADE HIM THINK THAT HIS FRIEND WAS RESPONSIBLE, BECAUSE VICTOR ALWAYS BLAMED THE WORLD FOR HIS SHORT-COMINGS.
AND AS THE YEARS WENT ON, HE DESTROYED ANYONE WHO DARED SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER.
BUT HE WAS HUMAN, AND HEIR TO HUMAN FRAILTIES. HE REFUSED TO BELIEVE THAT ONE OF HIS INTELLECT COULD BECOME...ADDLED. AND NO ONE WAS LEFT TO TELL HIM OTHERWISE.
EVENTUALLY HE BECAME SO ADDLED THAT HE LOST ALL HIS POWER...HIS LAND...HIS GREATNESS...EVERYTHING... AND HE DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE.
BECAUSE ARMOR CAN PROTECT YOU FROM EVERYTHING EXCEPT YOURSELF.

THAT IS A TRAGIC TALE.
IT IS, RATHER.
IS IT ABOUT ANYONE I KNOW?
THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME.
TIME.
YES, A WASTE OF--
YOU ARE HERE...BECAUSE OF TIME. YOU NEED TO KNOW OF ITS MANIPULATION, OF HOW IT CAN BE MANIPULATED.
YES. YES, THAT'S RIGHT. HOW DID YOU KNOW?
SHE TOLD US.
SHE? SHE WHO--?
DO YOU TRULY NEED TO ASK?
MISS MILLER, I WILL NOT LET YOU GO.
IS THAT A THREAT OR A BUTCHERED SONG LYRIC?
HARD TO SAY. IT DEPENDS UPON MY MOOD.

WHY IS THIS MAN NOT DEAD?
HE DIED IN THE CAMPS. THEN, JUST TO MAKE SURE, CORTEX WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE DISPOSED OF HIM AGAIN TO GUARANTEE THAT NOTHING LIKE THIS COULD OCCUR.
SO I DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND WHY I AM LOOKING AT HIM SPEAKING TO SOME BROKEN-DOWN, EXILED FORMER DICTATOR.
A DICTATOR, MY DEAR FALCONE, WHO REMAINS THE FOREMOST LIVING EXPERT ON TIME TRAVEL.
HIS MIND IS LITTLE MORE THAN VANILLA PUDDING.
VON DOOM'S MIND AT "LITTLE MORE" IS STILL MORE THAN MOST OF US ON OUR BEST DAYS.
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST I DO, SHAW?
YOU'RE THE PRESIDENT'S SCIENCE ADVISOR, DOCTOR. I DOUBT YOU NEED ME TO GIVE YOU GUIDANCE.
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE.
CONNIE? I'LL BE NEEDING A SQUADRON OF SENTINELS TO BE DISPATCHED TO DETROIT IMMEDIATELY. ALSO, PATCH ME THROUGH TO CORTEX, REAL-TIME LINK.

CORTEX?
GO AWAY I'M BUSY.
FOR ME, YOU MAKE THE TIME.
HUMF. NAPPING ON THE JOB. THERE'S OUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK.
MY ATTENTION CAPABILITIES ARE CONSIDERABLE, BUT NOT INFINITE. THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY PLACES I CAN LOOK AT ONCE. NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF MY HEAD
CORTEX! I NEED TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT MADROX.
GO. AWAY. YOU FLAMING TWIT
CONNIE? SEND A PULSE THROUGH THE LINK TO CORTEX IMMEDIATELY, PLEASE.

GUIDO, WAIT!
NOTHIN' TO WAIT FOR, RIC! TIME TO KICK THE SHATTER OUT OF SHATTERSTAR!
HE IS STRONG AND HIS BODY APPEARS RESISTANT TO DAMAGE. BUT HE LEADS WITH HIS CHIN AND HIS MOUTH IS OPEN.
A SWORD THRUST AT A NINETY-DEGREE ANGLE SHOULD PENETRATE HIS BRAIN AND RENDER HIM--
YAAAARRRHHHHHH!!!!!
DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION NOW, CORTEX?
SON OF A--!
I SAID: DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?
I'M ALL EARS.

UNHHH...
HUH?
IT'S NOT!
SHATTERSTAR! YOU OKAY?
RIC! KEEP AWAY FROM HIM! IT COULD BE A TRICK--!
RICTOR?
YEAH, IT'S ME, DUDE.
IT'S OKAY. WHATEVER HAPPENED, IT'S GONNA BE FINE. NO WORRIES.
UH-KAY.
DIDN'T SEE THAT COMIN'.

NEXT ISSUE

BETTER MAILED THAN MAULED! SEND US YOUR LETTERS!

OKAY, OKAY, THAT'S NOT REALLY A MINIATURE MADROX. THAT'S CAROLINE DAVID BATTLING THE DARK SIDE ON STAR WARS WEEKEND IN DISNEY WORLD. BUT WE REALLY DO WANT YOUR LETTERS! SEND THEM TO **OFFICEX@MARVEL.COM** AND LABEL THEM OKAY TO PRINT. WE'LL PUT SOME OF OUR FAVORITES IN A LETTERS COLUMN NEXT ISSUE, WITH PETER DAVID DOING THE ANSWERS HIMSELF!

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